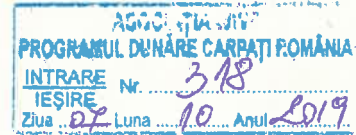




WWF Programul Dunăre Carpați
România
Afi Tech Park 1, Etaj 3
B-dul Tudor Vladimirescu Nr.29,
Sector 5, cod 050881
București
Tel.: +40 21 317 49 96
Fax: +40 21 317 49 97
office@wwf.ro
www.wwf.ro

Daniel Calleja Crespo, Director-General for Environment
European Commission
Directorate - General for Environment
1049 Brussels
Belgium



October 7th, 2019

PETITION

Legislative initiative in Romania that will be in breach of the EU Habitats Directive by removing brown bear's protection needs the urgent reaction of the European Commission before it is too late

Dear Mr. Calleja Crespo,

We are writing to you to alert your office about the legislative proposal in Romania for the modification and completion of the Hunting Law no. 407/2006, registered in the Romanian Senate under no. L294/2019 (and registered in the Romanian Chamber of Deputies under no. PL-x nr. 413/2019).

This proposal significantly threatens the implementation and achievement of the Habitats Directive's objectives both in Romania and at an EU level. We would like to draw your attention to an extremely serious matter that would lead to the flagrant violation (by the state institutions) of the European legislation on nature conservation: On 25th September, the Romanian Senate, approved among other very confusing and unnecessary amendments to the Romanian Hunting Law no. 407/2006, **the change of the hunting regime for the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), a species that is strictly protected under EU legislation.** The Romanian Chamber of Deputies (the decisive chamber) is likely to approve this at any time now; this would lead to the immediate implementation of the new amendments, with major consequences for the future of this species which is listed both in Annex II and Annex IV of the Habitats Directive.

Details about the process:

- The Government of Romania put forward a recommendation regarding the aforementioned legislative initiative, under no. 1005/01.07.2019, registered in the Senate on 12.07.2019. The Government, through its recommendation, agreed on July 1st 2019 to adopt the initiators' legislative proposal. At that time, the legislative proposal in question did not aim to change the bear hunting regime.



- The proposal was approved favorably and without amendments by the Defense Commission (no. 262/04.09.2019), the Commission on the Environment (no.40/ 11.09.2019) and the Legal Committee (151/24.09.2019) in the Senate.

- On September 24th 2019, the Commission on Agriculture, Food Industry and Rural Development together with the Water, Forestry Commission submitted for debate and adoption in the Senate plenary (for the next day), a Joint Report on the legislative proposal in question (no. 218/24.09.2019 and no. 70/24.09.2019), containing new amendments to the Hunting Law no. 407/2006, among which was the amendment regarding the change of the bear hunting regime (an amendment not included in the initial version of the legislative proposal and which has not been endorsed favorably by the other Senate Commissions or the Romanian Government).

- According to this new amendment (Art. IV) in the version approved by the Senate, for a period of 5 years, the species *Ursus arctos* (species strictly protected under the Habitats Directive - Annex II and Annex IV) is removed from Annex 2 (protected species) of the Hunting Law no. 407/2006 and moved to Annex 1 of this law, thus allowing the regular hunting of this species. This amendment was adopted by the Senate of Romania on September 25th 2019, without taking into account that it breaches both the national legislative provisions regarding the conservation of biodiversity (Government Emergency Order no. 57/2007 with subsequent amendments and completions) and the EU legislative provisions (the Habitats Directive).

- Immediately after the approval in the Senate, WWF Romania asked Prime-minister Viorica Dăncilă to react to this initiative. From the afore-mentioned Joint Report, one can conclude that the debate regarding the final legislative proposal was attended by representatives of the Government Mr. Ion Cîmpeanu - State Secretary at the Ministry of the Environment and Mr. Ilie Mihalache - Director at the Ministry of Waters and Forests. However, to date, **no official reaction from these public institutions, or from the Romanian Government/Prime minister Viorica Dăncilă, has been announced.** We believe that the Romanian Government should have positioned itself against the adoption of such an amendment to the Hunting Law no. 407/2006, highlighting that **this amendment is not endorsed by the European Commission and has no clear justifications based on specialized studies regarding the bear population size and growth rate, etc.**

- WWF initiated a public petition against this specific amendment of the legislative proposal, which has been supported by more than 30,000 Romanians.

- The initiative is now brought for approval to the Chamber of Deputies, the decisive chamber, and is expected to be analyzed and approved shortly in the Commissions for environment and agriculture.

Taking into consideration both: **the adoption procedure** - the lack of an opinion of the Senate' Environment Commission on this amendment, as well as **the content and legal implications of this amendment** on the European biodiversity conservation legislation, **we ask the European Commission to urgently issue an official opinion on the situation and to request the removal of the amendment in question on the ground that it would cause a breach of the EU Habitats Directive.**

We urge the European Commission to react as promptly as possible, taking into consideration that the final approval might come any time now.

Yours sincerely,

Orieta Hulea
Country Manager



Supported by (list of organisations, co-signatories):

Asociația pentru Conservarea Diversității Biologice (ACDB)

Federatia Coalitia Natura 2000

Fauna & Flora International (FFI)

Humane Society International – Romania

Fundatia Conservation Carpathia

Asociatia Parcul Natural Vacaresti

Asociatia Alitudine

Asociatia Kogayon

Asociatia Wilderness Research and Conservation

Asociatia Aqua Crisius

Animal Rescue and Care Association

Animal Society

Fundația Adapostul Speranta

Fundatia Visul Luanei